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1861

STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. CAREY A. TRIMBLE,

OF OHIO.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 5, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. TRIMBLE said :

Mr. SPEAKER: I have listened to the debate on the propositions of the committee of thirty-three with all the interest which the importance of the subject inspires; and only now participate in the discussion from a conviction that every Representative, in a juncture so critical, should vindicate his acts to his constituents.

Representing a district which borders on Virginia and Kentucky for more than one hundred miles, with a large proportion of its population coming originally from those States, and having extensive business connections with all the southern States of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, I can but feel a deep interest in any event that would disturb our present social and business relations. I have, too, a personal interest in this matter; and am bound by ties of consanguinity and friendship to nearly every border slave State of the Union. The sympathy of a common origin, and the inheritance of a common country, have made us one people, and the ties that bind us cannot be ruptured for slight and trivial causes. We all profess a love for the Union. Its countless blessings have fallen alike upon the people of all the States. Under its broad shield all have shared in a prosperity unexampled in the history of the world. Our peace at home and proud distinction abroad are the fruits of union, not the result of separate State existence. The Government of the Union—though imperfect, as all human governments are—has yet given greater security, and more uniform protection, to the rights of the people in all the States than were ever before enjoyed under any Government instituted by man.

For the first time in our history, an attempt is made to resist the will of the people, when fairly expressed in compliance with all the forms of the Constitution. Mr. Lincoln was chosen President for four years, on the 6th of November last. No fault is found with his character or ability. No one denies that his political opinions were clearly set forth by himself, fully discussed by his

friends, and emphatically indorsed by the people. But those who nominated Mr. Breckinridge, and with great earnestness and industry supported him, having failed in the election, now declare that Mr. Lincoln shall not be inaugurated, or if he should be, that his rule shall be over a dismembered Confederacy. These men, having succeeded heretofore in exciting the prejudices and inflaming the passions of the southern people against their brethren of the North, by the grossest misrepresentations of their principles and purposes, found little difficulty in inciting a rebellion which would make good their threats. Six States have already seceded from the Confederacy—not peacefully, but violently. Nearly all of the forts, arsenals, dock-yards, arms, ammunition, and other property of the Government within their limits have been seized. Armies are raised; troops are marching to the assault of the only posts still held by the United States; a vessel of the Government, with the stars and stripes unfurled, whilst carrying relief to the gallant Major Anderson at Fort Sumter, is fired into; the Federal courts are dissolved; the revenues seized; and every step taken which can mark a state of revolution and war.

Thus far have these desperate and desperately wicked men proceeded in the execution of their threat to tear down the fairest temple of liberty the world has ever seen. The work of destruction will go on, unless the power of the Government, and that greater power, the voice of the people, is exerted to arrest it.

The Government has made no attack upon a single right of these men, or of the States which they have instigated to rebellion. They themselves boast that the South has controlled the Government for fifty years. In all of its departments, for the last eight years, they have ruled supreme. And even now they cannot complain of any want of sympathy in its Executive for their treason. No specification of wrongs has been presented, although there has been no lack of invective for the purpose of deceiving their people. In fact, southern men who deny the justice of the Government towards their section and its institutions, simply reproach

themselves with infidelity to their own rights and their own interests.

Mr. Speaker, it has been alleged that the personal liberty bills, so called, of some of the northern States are a sufficient cause for a disruption of the Union. Some of these laws were enacted prior to the passage of the fugitive slave act of 1850; and all of them, I believe, have been in existence during at least two Democratic Administrations. Why were they never discovered to be a cause for the dissolution of the Union until now? Their ostensible object is to prevent kidnapping; but our southern brethren allege that they are intended to interfere with their constitutional right of reclaiming their fugitive slaves. It so happens, however, that the States enacting such laws are neither troubled with fugitives nor kidnappers, and those complaining most against them are States from which few or no slaves escape. While I have no sympathy with the spirit which prompts to resistance of any Federal law, I must think that undue importance is given to these personal liberty acts. If any of them do conflict with the constitutional rights of slaveholders, to that extent they are void; and it is the fault of those complaining of them that they have never tested their constitutionality in the proper courts. It ought to be remembered, Mr. Speaker, (and I was glad that the venerable Senator from Rhode Island brought the subject to the notice of the Senate,) that the first personal liberty bill of Massachusetts, the State against which Democratic stump orators in the free States, and disunion Democrats in the South, hurl their bitterest anathemas, were first introduced and passed in 1842 by a Democratic Legislature, and approved by a Democratic Governor. And further, that this Governor was nominated three years afterwards by a Democratic President to the best office in New England, (collector at Boston,) and every Democrat then in the Senate of the United States voted for his confirmation. I think, sir, we shall find that other evils complained of have a similar origin.

A change of northern sentiment, as indicated by the rapid growth of the Republican party, has excited apprehension that this party may, in the future, use its power to hem in slavery, and even to interfere with it in the States, and is made a cause of secession. Frivolous and false as such pretenses are, they have been used both North and South to awaken fear and arouse sectional animosity. Who does not know that the Constitution protects slavery in the States where it exists "under the laws thereof?" The protection is as ample and complete as that of any right of the citizen. No party or power, under any circumstances, (except just such as secessionists are now inaugurating,) could interfere with it. Mr. Lincoln has no more power, as the Executive of the nation, over this matter than any other citizen.

His political friends are in the minority in both Houses of Congress, and have neither the inclination nor the power to interfere with it.

Possessing now the best portion of the American continent, in richness of soil, salubrity of climate, variety and value of products, unsurpassed by any part of the globe, these wild and crazy men stretch out their arms to grasp not alone the barren plains of our own country, but the lands of our weak and helpless neighbors. The passion for expansion is caused less by a desire for an enlarged area for slavery than for an extension of political power.

The free States have a population of eleven persons to the square mile, while the slave States have but nine, showing that the North needs expansion more than the South. There are now four million slaves in the slave States; and, according to the estimates presented to this House by my colleague, (Mr. CORWIN,) it will require sixty million to cultivate the cotton lands alone in these States. More than a hundred years must pass away before that period can arrive in the South when the declaration we so often hear, "we must expand or die," will be at all appropriate.

The sentiment of the northern people on the subject of slavery has undergone no change, and, cannot, therefore, be made a pretext for secession. While "they have never proposed or desired to interfere with it in the States where it exists," they have always been opposed to it, always believed it to be an evil, and have ever resisted its extension.

What has been the history of this subject of slavery? Of the original thirteen States composing this confederacy, twelve were slaveholding. That it was regarded as an evil, cannot be doubted. One of the complaints against the mother country was, that she had forced it upon the colonies against their will. With zeal and determined purpose, the great and good men who achieved our independence and framed our admirable Constitution and system of Government, labored for its extinction. Most prominent among those who sought the removal of the evil, were the patriots and statesmen of Virginia. They desired to give to the world a practical demonstration of the principles which they had embodied in their Declaration of Independence. In conformity with this wish, and the sentiment of the country, the ordinance of 1787 was passed, which prohibited slavery in all the territory then belonging to the Government. It was permitted in the territory from which the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi were formed, because either by agreement or express provision in the acts of cession, Congress was prohibited from interfering with the institution. State necessity required that the mouth of the Mississippi should be controlled by this Government. To secure this, the Territory of Louisiana, in which slavery already existed, was purchased of France for \$15,000,000. State necessity demanded the possession of Florida, where slavery also existed; and it too was purchased of Spain in 1819, for \$5,000,000, and has since cost us more than \$50,000,000 to reclaim it from the Indians. Louisiana was admitted as a slave State in 1812; but when Missouri, in 1820, applied for admission, a part of the Representatives from the Southern States, and nearly all from the northern States resisted her application.

Up to this time, slavery had existed by law in all the territory the General Government had ever acquired, at the time of its acquisition. The Northwestern Territory, at the time it was ceded by Virginia, was, *in law*, slave territory—if we admit that Virginia had a valid title to it—although slavery did not exist there *in fact*, because it was uninhabited. Up to this time, also, it had been the policy of the Government to permit slavery to remain in territory where it existed *in fact*, but to exclude it from uninhabited country where it had no existence in fact. But now, on the application of Missouri to come into the Union as a slave State, the first serious attempt was made to enforce the ultimate abolition of slavery in territory where it already had an actual existence, and to prohibit its further introduction therein. The contest assumed a sectional aspect: and so fierce was the strife in Con-

gress and throughout the country, as to threaten the safety of the Union. When the bill to authorize the people of Missouri to form a constitution and State government came up in the House of Representatives on the 13th of February, 1819, the following amendment was offered:

"*And provided, also.* That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, and that all children of slaves born within said State after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free, but may be held to service until the age of twenty-five years."

On this amendment the vote was—yeas 87, nays 76. Of the eighty-seven yeas, all were from the free States but one. Of the seventy-six nays, sixty-six were from slave States, and ten from free States. In the Senate this amendment was lost; but on the final vote in that body for the admission of Missouri without restriction as to slavery, the vote was—yeas 23, nays 21. Of the yeas, twenty were from slave States, and three from free States. Of the nays, nineteen were from free States, and two from Delaware, a slave State. Among the nays I find the name of my paternal uncle, Colonel William Trimble, who then represented Ohio, the State of his adoption, in the United States Senate. Though reared in a slave State, and an inheritor of slaves, he had inhibited the sentiments of a large minority of the people of the then border slave States, and in all this struggle, vindicated his convictions by voting against the further extension of this evil. Some of those who approved his votes then, would, I fear, denounce him as an Abolitionist now. During the three years of this Missouri contest, the votes of northern men exhibit great unanimity, both against the admission of Missouri with slavery and the organization of Kansas as a slave Territory.

These facts, Mr. Speaker, show that public sentiment at the North, in opposition to slavery, has not progressed since 1820. It then manifested itself against *continuance* of slavery in territory where it already had an actual existence. It now manifests itself only in opposition to the *extension* of slavery into free territory, where it has no existence in law or in fact. In other words, it manifests itself now in precisely the same phase that it manifested itself, in the South as well as the North, at the time of the formation of the Government, when both sections concurred in excluding slavery from the great Northwestern Territory.

The Missouri controversy was practically and wisely settled, in 1820, by the admission of Missouri without restriction, and the establishment of the parallel of 36 deg. 30 min. as a dividing line through our then territorial possessions; north of which slavery was prohibited, and south of which it was, by implication, allowed. The South then claimed this compromise as a triumph. The North has ever since cheerfully yielded to them the fruits of that triumph, and cordially acquiesced in a compromise reluctantly entered into on their part. If it had been permitted to stand; if it had not been wickedly abrogated, at the instance of bad and wicked men, the difficulties which now afflict our country, and threaten us with the horrors of civil war, would never have been visited upon us. If the re-enactment of that compromise, precisely as our fathers made it, and the extension of that line through all our present territory, would restore peace and harmony to a distracted country, the North, I believe, would again acquiesce in such a settlement.

Mr. Speaker, from this first serious controversy on the subject of slavery, so amicably adjusted, to this, which, I trust in God, may be the last, the people of the North have occupied the same position of opposition to its extension. Look through all the legislation of the country, on the annexation of Texas, the Wilmot proviso contest, and that growing out of our Mexican acquisitions, which resulted in the compromise of 1850; and, with but few exceptions, northern Representatives of all parties have exhibited a uniform opposition to the spread of slavery. This sentiment, I say, again, has not changed, unless in this regard—that it is less exacting now than it was in 1820. If the South ever had any reason to apprehend danger to its institutions from this cause, it has less now than it had then. It is not, therefore, good cause for secession.

Mr. Speaker, the most serious ground of complaint on the part of our southern brethren is, that they are denied "equal rights in the Territories." Is this well founded? Are not the Territories open alike to the

citizens of the slave and the free States? Every one of the six million non-slaveholders in the slave States has the same rights in any Territory which you or I possess; no more, no less; and even the four hundred thousand slaveholders have the full benefit of the Dred Scott decision, unreversed and unaffected by any subsequent legislation. What more do they want?

Have they not carried their slaves into Kansas and Nebraska and New Mexico? The Government has not excluded them; Congress has not excluded them. True, the people of Kansas preferred freedom to slavery; and after a long and bloody contest have adopted a free State constitution and been admitted into the Union. Nebraska, as was her right, has, through her Legislature, followed the example of Kansas, while New Mexico has established slavery and passed laws for its protection. Where is the Territory from which the South has been excluded? There is none; and all the denunciations of disunionists and the lamentations of their northern sympathizers amount to just nothing at all. New Mexico was organized in 1850, under the compromise bill of that year, and has been open to emigration from the South for ten years. No obstacles have been interposed; and yet the southern people have not found the inducements sufficient to transfer their slaves from the cotton and sugar plantations to the barren plains of this Territory. In ten years only about twenty have reached there, and in ten more this number is more likely to be diminished than increased.

Mr. Speaker, the simple, plain facts in regard to the Territories are, that in 1850 New Mexico and Utah were organized without restrictions as to slavery, the question being left with the people to determine for themselves. Democrats in Congress from both the South and North voted for this law; and the party indorsed it in the convention which nominated Mr. Pierce in 1852. In 1854 the Democratic party in Congress repealed the Missouri compromise of 1820, which had excluded slavery from all territory north of 36° 30', and organized the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska under the principle of squatter sovereignty.

The object of this legislation was said to be the removal of the slavery question from Congress. The country now understands it to have been the introduction of slavery into Territories from which it had been excluded by the compromise of 1820. Now, sir, under Democratic law, slavery has been carried into all these Territories; under Democratic law, the people in Kansas and Nebraska have chosen free institutions, and in New Mexico slave institutions. These democratic laws are now on the statute-books, unchanged. The status of all the Territories is settled; and if the South has been deprived of any of her rights, it is no fault of the North, for the South has made the laws and had their execution in her own hands. All this outcry, therefore, about the North depriving the South of equal rights in the Territories, is a miserable sham, successfully used by northern demagogues and southern secessionists in producing strife and discord.

It now remains to be seen whether the sober second thought of the people of this great and prosperous country will deem these causes sufficient to justify the dismemberment of their Government, and the inauguration of the deadly strife of war.

Mr. Speaker, propositions have been presented to Congress and the country, by the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, [Mr. CRITTENDEN,] as a panacea for the great evil of secession. My support of them has been requested by a portion of my constituents,

and I wish to state some of the reasons which will compel me to decline the request. It is greatly to be regretted that such propositions should have been introduced by such a man. Honored and revered as is his name in all the middle and western States, anything emanating from him in a time of peril to the Union would be received with favor, and without scrutiny. In this instance, thousands of intelligent men, everywhere, supposed that he had merely proposed the restoration of the old Missouri compromise, and, without examination, gave their approval. It is now apparent that the great name of this venerable patriot was used to give weight to the devices of other men. It would be unjust to him to suppose that his better judgment, uninfluenced by fear for his country, could have approved a scheme so hopelessly impracticable. The emergency which called it forth is now upon us; but before it can be made available, it must receive the sanction of two-thirds of both Houses of Congress, and the vote of three-fourths of the States. This requires time. Before California and Oregon could be reached and heard from, the hour would have arrived and passed at which we are told the Union is to be dissolved, unless these measures are adopted. But, sir, if there was time for this action of the States, their extraordinary character would insure their rejection, and thus increase the evil they were proposed to remedy.

What are these propositions? They consist of six amendments of the Constitution, and four declaratory resolutions. I shall only notice those to which I have the most serious objection.

The first proposes to divide the Territories of the United States; "now held or hereafter acquired," between slavery and freedom, by a geographical line of $36^{\circ} 30'$. All north of the line to be free; but "in all the territory south of the line, now held or hereafter acquired, slavery of the African race is hereby recognized as existing, and shall not be interfered with by Congress, but shall be protected as property by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance." When the Territories either north or south of the line have acquired the requisite population, they may be admitted into the Union, with or without slavery, as their constitution may provide.

I object to this proposition, first, because I am satisfied with our Constitution as it is—just as our fathers made it. We have lived under it and prospered for eighty years. Every right of the States, and of the citizens of such States, has been protected, and no necessity has yet arisen, as I believe, to demand a change. I object to it because it undertakes prospectively to establish slavery in foreign countries—in territory which we do not own, and have no right to assume that we ever shall own. It is to be held out as a bribe to marauders and fillibusters,

who would involve us in wars of conquest against all the weak neighboring States, whose lands might be adapted to slavery. I object again, because it "recognizes" or establishes and protects slavery in free territory, and against the will and wishes of the people.

I object again, because it virtually excludes my constituents, and all other men who prefer freedom to slavery, from all the Territories that may hereafter be acquired south of $36^{\circ} 30'$, except at the hazard of a long, and it might be, a bloody contest, such as disgraced our annals in Kansas.

I object again, because it is in violation of the principles of all free government; and lastly, sir, because it demands a sacrifice of my convictions of right, and of my principles, inherited from a Virginia ancestry, and strengthened by the teachings of southern statesmen. I believe slavery to be an evil; and I believe it more firmly now than ever before. I believe, too, that it is a local institution, and wholly dependent upon local law for its maintenance. I cannot, then, consent to provide by constitutional amendment for its nationalization, and for the acquisition of territory into which this evil is to be extended and perpetuated. I stand, sir, where Mr. Clay stood in 1850, when he declared:

"And now, sir, coming from a slave State, as I do, I owe it to myself, I owe it to truth. I owe it to the subject, to state that no earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure for the introduction of slavery where it had not before existed, either south or north of that line. Coming, as I do, from a slave State, it is my solemn, deliberate, and well-matured determination that no power—no earthly power—shall compel me to vote for the positive introduction of slavery either south or north of that line."

This, sir, is the position of my constituents. The question was fairly submitted to them at the last presidential election, and decided by the emphatic majority of twenty-two thousand in a vote of twenty-two thousand five hundred. Republicans and Douglas Democrats agreed, not only in their opposition to the disunion dogma of slavery protection, but also as to the power to exclude slavery from a Territory; the former claiming the power for both Congress and the Territorial Legislature, the latter for the Territorial Legislature only. The delegates from this district at the Charleston and Baltimore Democratic conventions preferred the rupture of their party to a surrender of these principles. They were sustained by their party friends at home, and one of them chosen as their candidate for Congress. But a more emphatic indorsement may be found in the presidential vote—Mr. Douglas receiving over ten thousand, while Mr. Breckinridge received four hundred and fifty. To a public sentiment thus fairly and fully expressed by the people of my district, on the 6th of November last, I cannot prove recalcitrant.

Article three. This article is intended to

protect slavery in the District of Columbia. Mr. Speaker, I know of no party that proposes to interfere with it, and would deem it a violation of good faith in any party to do so. While I am willing, therefore, to unite with men of all parties in a declaration that Congress shall not abolish slavery in the District so long as it exists in the State of Maryland, nor without the consent of the inhabitants, I am not willing to deprive the people of Maryland and the District of the exercise of their discretion, by requiring the consent of Virginia, who has no greater interest than any other slave State.

Article five. It is well known, Mr. Speaker, that the fugitive slave law of 1850 is obnoxious to the northern people, and that it was drawn up by its author with the express view of making it so. The occasional resistance to its execution, and the enactment of personal liberty bills in some of the States, are chiefly due to some of its harsh and unjust provisions. In proposing a modification of the law, it was reasonable to expect that some regard would be had to the feelings and sentiments of the people among whom it was to have its operation. In one of Mr. CRITTENDEN's resolutions, two changes are proposed which are proper to be made—one making the fee of the commissioner equal in amount, "whether his decision be in favor of or against the claimant;" the other limiting the authority of the marshal to summon to his aid the *posse comitatus* only in cases in which there shall be resistance, or danger of resistance or rescue. But, sir, while these two changes are proposed in the law, which is subject to repeal by Congress at any time, other provisions more objectionable are proposed to be incorporated in the Constitution, which are to be irrepealable forever. The first makes it the duty of Congress to provide by law that the United States shall pay to the owner who shall apply for it the full value of his fugitive slave in all cases where the marshal or other officer whose duty it was to arrest said fugitive was prevented from so doing by violence or *intimidation*; or when, after arrest, said fugitive was rescued by force.

The second provides, that when the United States shall pay for said fugitive, they shall have the right in their own name to sue the county in which said violence, *intimidation*, or rescue was committed, and to recover from it, with interest and damages, the amount paid by them for said fugitive slave; and then that "the county shall sue and recover from the wrong-doers or rescuers." It is impossible to conceive of a measure more full of mischief, more liable to abuse, more certain to excite angry discussion in and out of Congress. Every rescue of a fugitive slave, or attempt at *intimidation* or rescue, renews the agitation of the slavery question in Congress; for the Government cannot pay for the negro until Congress appropriates the money. In every

county of the northern States where a rescue or attempt at intimidation or rescue is charged, the people are either to be taxed for the value of the negro, or burdened with the expense of resisting the suit of the United States. Angry discussions, sectional animosity, and hatred to the Government, will be the natural fruits of such an enactment. The people in the free States will never consent to be harassed by expensive law-suits, or taxed for the value of runaway negroes, upon the testimony of a worthless and cowardly deputy marshal, who fails, from mere *intimidation*, to execute a Federal law. In my district there has been no opposition to the execution of the present fugitive slave law, and less complaint made of it than in New England, and the northern portion of the western States; but we, no less than our northern friends, think the law objectionable, and liable to great abuse. It has been abused in my district, as it has been elsewhere; and it may justly be claimed, as proof of the loyalty of our people, that so few cases of successful interference have occurred.

The President declares in his message that the law has been executed in every contested case during his administration. Mr. ETHERIDGE, of Tennessee, stated in this House, a few days since, "that not a dozen slaves have been rescued within the last forty years from the custody of the officers of the United States." The Senator from Illinois, (Mr. DOUGLAS,) and the Senator from Ohio, (Mr. PUGH,) both testified on the floor of the Senate, this session, to the fact of its uniform execution. And, Mr. Speaker, though a class of unscrupulous politicians, even in my district, as well as elsewhere in the North, for political purposes, have defamed their own sections about the enforcement of this law, I affirm here that scarcely any law upon the statute-book of any free border State of the Union has been so uniformly and faithfully executed as this. I deem this, then, a good reason why the present law should not be made more stringent, oppressive, and unjust. If the object be to *defeat* the purpose of the law by making it more obnoxious to public sentiment, then it is accomplished by this constitutional amendment of Mr. CRITTENDEN.

But, sir, to make these propositions still more objectionable and impracticable, the very foundation of all free government is violated by providing, in the sixth article, that the five preceding articles and two articles in our present Constitution shall never be amended. Whatever propriety there may be in closing the door against any amendment of the Constitution authorizing the General Government to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists, against the will of their citizens, I never can consent, and my constituents never will consent that this untried experiment of compelling the people of a county in which a slave may

be rescued by violence or *intimidation*, to pay the value of such slave, shall be made an *irrepealable* article of the Constitution, as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Nor can I consent, nor will my constituents consent, that a perpetual and irrepealable guarantee shall be given to the establishment and protection of slavery in all the territory which we may acquire for all time to come. The proposition is a monstrous one. No matter what changes time may make in the affairs of men, their moral sentiments, their interests, or political necessities, so far as this Government may extend its jurisdiction southward, even if it shall stretch forth its arms and embrace all Central and South America, it is to carry slavery with it and fasten it upon the inhabitants, whether they desire it or not, by an irrevocable law.

And these are the propositions which have been brought into the Congress of the United States, and pressed upon us by southern Democrats and northern Democrats and Bell men, as a remedy for defects in our Constitution; as a measure of peace—a bribe to traitors. They are the propositions which party leaders and a debased partisan press throughout the land, are urging the people to indorse in *Union* meetings, which they get up for the purpose. If they are just and right, what a terrible responsibility must fall upon the Democratic press, the Democratic leaders, and the one million five hundred thousand men who cast their votes for Mr. Douglas at the last Presidential election, for the immense losses and suffering brought upon the country by the derangement of its commerce and trade and industry! Who but they are responsible for the rebellion and treason that threatens the total annihilation of the Government? If they are just and right, then the demand of the southern disunion Democracy at Charleston and Baltimore was not unjust and improper. What did they ask? Far less than these propositions concede: simply the adoption by Congress of a slave code to protect slave property in the Territories which we now own. But rather than yield to such a demand, the Douglas Democracy suffered their slave code brethren to secede from the convention, break up the great Democratic party, and thus secure an easy triumph for Mr. Lincoln.

They professed then to believe that popular sovereignty was the only principle upon which the rights of the States, the peace of the country, and the perpetuity of our Government could be sustained. Though agreeing to leave the question to the decision of the Supreme Court, they yet maintained that protection to slave property in the Territories would be unconstitutional and against the spirit of free institutions.

These same men now throw away as a worthless thing the principles for which, ninety days since, they professed so much

devotion. Then, a Congressional slave code for the Territories was an abomination; now, the protection of slavery, not only in the Territories we now have or *may hereafter acquire* south of 36°30', but all places under the jurisdiction of the United States, in its transit through free States, by all the powers of the territorial and General Government, is proper and right. Were these men sincere? Was popular sovereignty a great principle before the election, and a great humbug and cheat after the election? Practice, it is said, makes perfect; but the frequent shifts and changes of the Democratic creeds in the last few years will hardly account for the facility with which this abandonment of a favorite doctrine of the party has been made. A sudden inspiration of patriotism explains it all. The country is in danger; Lincoln has been elected; the South is displeased; and as she has rewarded us well for our devotion to her interests heretofore, so now we will surrender our principles, save the Union, reconstruct the great Democratic party on a slave basis, pure and simple, and once more hope to revel in honors and spoils of office.

Mr. Speaker, every department of this Government—executive, judicial, and legislative—has been in the hands of the Democratic party for the last eight years. Its policy and legislation have been directed and controlled by that party. What they have been is matter of history, and I shall not now speak of them; but the verdict of condemnation by the people was emphatically pronounced in November last. Sir, bad as the administration of Mr. Buchanan was believed to be, the half had not been told. The developments of corruption in high places; the complete bankruptcy of the Government; the indictment of a Cabinet officer by the grand jury of this District for embezzlement; the conspiracy of some of the President's own advisers to overthrow the Government; and the complicity of the President himself, as shown by his own statements, are facts that amaze and alarm the country. And now, when this party has succeeded in its work of destruction, and our once glorious Union is declared by themselves to be drawing its last gasp, they throw up their hands in holy horror, and call upon Republicans to avert, if possible, the disaster which they have produced. How? Is not the Government still in the hands of those who have sought to destroy it?

The rebellion of the six seceding States is openly justified by Democrats, even in the North, and resistance to the execution of the laws encouraged. The President seeks only to preserve peace and avoid collision by surrendering the Federal property to the rebellious States. Republicans are perfectly powerless, except to sustain the President and vote supplies. How, then, are they to save the Union? Democracy prescribes the mode: adopt the Crittenden proposition by a two-thirds vote, help us to nationalize slavery,

and the work is done. No matter if the voice of two-thirds of the people has declared against this thing; no matter if Republicans do violate pledges to constituents and sacrifice their principles and views of policy in the government, the Union is in danger by our act, and if you do not help us save it in this way it shall not be saved at all.

Mr. Speaker, this is the spirit in which these propositions have been pressed here and presented by some of the States as an ultimatum for the adjustment of our unfortunate troubles. From the hour of their introduction it must have been known to gentlemen here that they were impracticable, and it is therefore to be regretted that the discussions here should have inspired hope of their passage in the breasts of honest Union men of the border States. The Union, sir, cannot be saved by these amendments to the Constitution. Every member of this body knows that, and the country ought to have known it long since.

Mr. Speaker, having accomplished my purpose in stating the reasons which would compel me to oppose the Crittenden propositions, I have but little more to say. A number of other propositions have been submitted to the House, with the view of providing an escape from the danger into which our country has fallen. Of their merits, their practicability, or their necessity, I do not propose to speak. They will be subject to amendment, and may be so modified as to render any criticisms upon them now inapplicable then.

We cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that our country is undergoing a great revolution; that open war and resistance to the authority of the Government exist in several of the southern States of the Confederacy. It is too apparent, also, that those to whom the authority and honor of the Government had been committed have been both openly and secretly aiding and abetting rebellion. Equally clear is it now that the purpose of the leading spirits in some of the seceding States to break up this Government, has been maturing for thirty years, and they only waited a favorable opportunity to strike the fatal blow. I need not refer to the speeches of gentlemen in the late conventions of these States, in which the avowals are made of their long-concealed designs. They are familiar to the House and to the country. These declarations are also accompanied by disclaimers of sudden passion or disappointed ambition having anything to do with the grave step which they have taken. Personal liberty bills; the non-execution of the fugitive slave law; equal rights in the Territories; the election of Lincoln; and all such causes of disaffection in the South, heretofore so industriously used upon the stump, by the press, and in Congress, are indignantly scouted as unworthy causes of so great an event as the birth of an empire.

Now, sir, under such circumstances, "what would you do?" is a very inappropriate question to put to me. If Abraham Lincoln was in the presidential chair instead of James Buchanan, I would answer that question as other gentlemen have answered it, and, I am most happy to say, as some Douglas Democrats have answered it. I would treat these erring States with great forbearance; but I would reinforce Forts Sumter and Pickens—the only defences now left in the possession of the Government—and defend them at all hazards. I would collect the revenue in all the ports on board of vessels stationed in the harbors; and when it could not be done, I would ask Congress to repeal the laws making them ports of entry. I would stop the mails, or leave them and the expense of carrying them to the care of the seceding States.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are told *here* every day, and, if I am not mistaken, the Legislatures of all the southern States still in the Union have formally resolved, that this would be regarded as *coercion*, and would unite all the slaveholding States in resistance. If these resolves should be made good, if such a united opposition as that of fifteen States should be made to the enforcement of the laws of the federal government, then, in my judgment, our government is a failure, and should be abandoned or remodelled. I would not test this question by the sword, when it would necessarily involve one-half of the country in a destructive war with the other half. But the question is the most important that has yet arisen in our country, and it may be that we cannot avoid its decision if we would.

If the right of a State or of several States to secede from the Union exists, whenever it suits their caprice or supposed interest, and the government cannot even so much as defend the property in those States which belongs to all the rest, nor protect the lives and property of the citizens of other States who may happen to be in those that secede, then our Constitution is a farce, and the government under it a mockery. Admit the doctrine, and the legislation of Congress, the raising and collection of revenue, the protection of the industrial interests of the country, and even the sentiments of the people, will be made, as now, pretexts for throwing off the authority of the government. No government can exist under such license, and it is idle to talk about it. If, then, the seceding States adhere to this position, and are justified and sustained in it by any considerable number of the other States, and if the causes are repudiated which have been heretofore urged in justification of secession, and the act is now based upon incompatibility of interest and character between the two sections, then are the hopes of compromise faint indeed. But I cannot believe that a majority even of the people in the border slave States are ready

to assume this position, or that such dissimilarity of character or interest exists as to preclude the possibility of our remaining one people, and under the same government.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that the public mind of the South has been poisoned by the instrumentality, not only of its own public men and newspaper press, but by the public men and press of the North. I know that the grossest misrepresentations of the feelings and sentiments of the northern people on the subject of slavery have been made by both. I know that the ravings of Abolitionists and the garbled extracts from the speeches and writings of a few prominent men have been scattered broadcast over the South as the real sentiment of all their people. And I know, too, that southern men, around their own family hearths, upon the corners of the streets, upon the stump, and at the hustings, have thoughtlessly given very erroneous ideas, to both white and black, of the aims of the Republican party. Unfortunate as is this state of things, it can and ought to be remedied. If southern gentlemen on this floor, as some noble spirits have done, would send out, in truthful and patriotic speeches, the antidote to the poison of misrepresentation, encourage a timid President in the enforcement of the laws, and demonstrate to their people the utter impossibility of any right of the South being disturbed by Mr. Lincoln or his party, the work of saving the Union would be half accomplished. Can we aid them? I think we can, and without the sacrifice of principle on the part of any one.

The North complains of the harshness, injustice, and frequent abuse of the fugitive slave law, the South of its inefficiency. The amendment to this law proposed by the committee of thirty-three, though not what many gentlemen would like to have it, must render it more efficient and less objectionable, and will therefore receive my support.

An unfounded apprehension pervades the southern mind that the institution of slavery, at some future time, will be attacked by the Republican or other dominant party of the North. Though we know this to be impossible, and that protection to slavery in the States is now perfect, under the Constitution, yet if a work of supererogation, in the way of amendment, will relieve this apprehension, let the people so decide if they will. As you would remove opposition to a Federal law in one section by consulting the sentiments of its people, so should you increase in the people of another section devotion to the Union and respect for the Constitution by consulting their fears and apprehensions. I will therefore vote to submit to the people, for their approval or rejection, the amendment to the Constitution proposed by the committee of thirty-three. For these propositions, and any others that meet the approval of my judgment, *as right and proper in themselves*, I shall vote, and be-

cause the bill for the admission of New Mexico is not of that character, I shall vote against it. As a measure of peace or compromise it will be unacceptable to the South. The reasons assigned for this opposition by the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. NELSON] in his report to the House satisfy me that this measure might result in increasing rather than in allaying the excitement in the South.

At the last session of Congress I voted to repeal the slave code and the law regulating peonage in this Territory, though I acknowledge now, as I did then, her right, under the act organizing the Territory, in the adoption of a constitution, to establish slavery. These odious laws must first be modified or repealed by the Territory before I would consent to vote for a bill to authorize the formation of a State government by her people, or for her admission as a State. The character of the population—being a mixture of Mexicans and Indians, extremely ignorant, and speaking a different language from ours—renders a longer pupillage necessary before bestowing upon her the rights of sovereignty. The statement just made by the delegate from this territory, [Mr. OTERO,] corroborates all that has been said as to the inability of the people there to sustain a State government. He said:

"New Mexico pays to the ministers of religion there—the Catholic religion—more than the taxation of the people of New Hampshire. Not a single county in the Territory is in debt. The Territory is not in debt. We have got no direct taxation, but we have indirect taxation."

If the indirect taxation is now greater in this Territory than the entire tax of New Hampshire, it is very evident that a people, poor as these are represented to be, could not bear the additional burden of a State government. But, sir, I will not repeat the arguments that have been urged against this measure. It is enough to know that it will not contribute to the object for which it is proposed—the conciliation of the South.

Mr. Speaker, the declaration is frequently made by gentlemen from both sections of the Union, "that the day for compromises is passed." This may be so, but the day for doing right is ever present. The fate of all former compromises furnishes, it is true, slight hopes for their permanency in the future. And to me, sir, it appears almost certain that no compromise that can be made here would bring back some of the States that have, so far as they could, dissolved their connection with their sister States; but the Union men in the border States should be sustained, if it can be done without dishonor and a sacrifice of principle and duty. We want their aid; they need ours; but if they persist in demanding, not what would be acceptable to themselves, but what will satisfy and restore the seceding States, then I fear that our labor is in vain, and to the last tribunal of resort—the people—must be carried the questions that now divide and distract the country.

